

HIGH ROADS OF SIKH HISTORY

BOOK-III

PRINCIPAL TEJA SINGH



PUBLICATION BUREAU
PUNJABI UNIVERSITY, PATIALA

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by
PRINCIPAL TEJA SINGH

2001
Copies : 1100
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by
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ISBN 81-7380-630-6

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FOREWORD

A few years back, the Punjabi University decided to reprint some of the old books of the great Punjabi writers. In pursuance of our policy we have already published some of these works. The writers include Professor Puran Singh, Bhai Vir Singh, Professor Teja Singh, Lala Dhani Ram Chatrik, Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid and Sardar Harinder Singh Roop.

The present series of the booklet entitled "Highroads of Sikh History", originally written by the late Professor Teja Singh, is in three parts. Part I contains 15 episodes from Sikh history; Part II gives character-sketches of some important personalities of Sikh history; and Part III presents a brief history of Sikhism.

These booklets are as much needed by our young men and women now as these were two generations ago. But, despite their usefulness and demand, they had been out of print. The University acquired copyrights and decided to publish them. The books are written in a simple language and can be easily understood by schoolboys. There is a great dearth of this type of literature in Punjab, and it is hoped that this series would be a welcome addition to the literature needed for moral and religious instruction of our young people.

Amarjit Singh
Director,
Planning and Development (Punjabi)

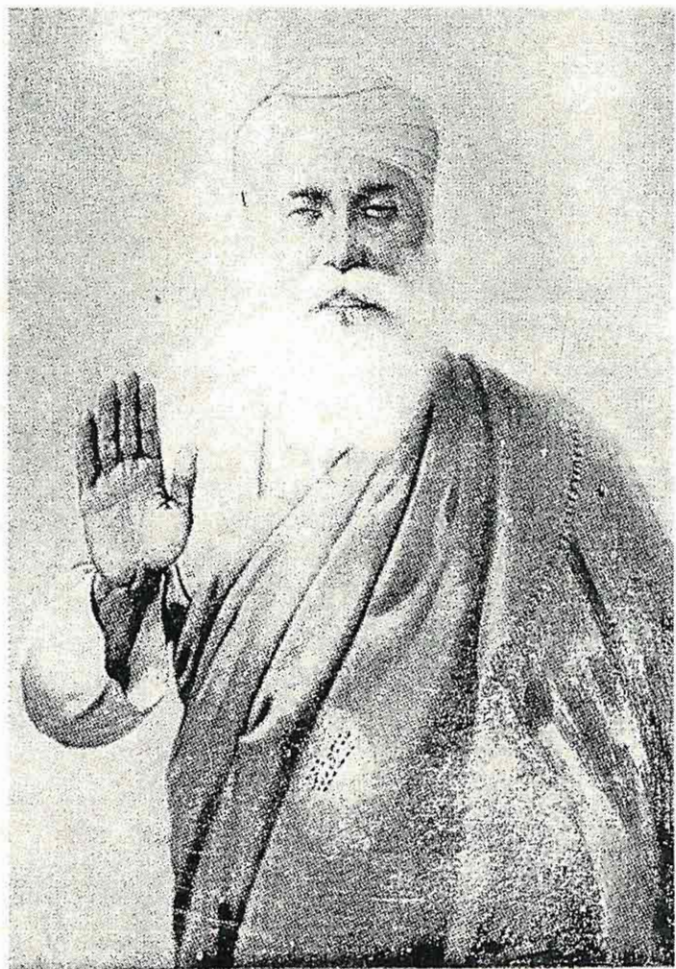
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Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji

Highroads of Sikh History

BOOK III

GURU NANAK

I

Sikhism is a religion which has been founded by the ten Gurus or teachers. The first was Guru Nanak, who was born in 1469 at a place called Talwandi, now called Nankana Sahib, in the district of Sheikhpura. His father's name was Kalu, a Patwari, who kept accounts of the land and the land-owners of the village.

Baba Nanak even as a child showed signs of great wisdom. At the age of seven he was placed under the village schoolmaster to learn reading and writing. He astonished his teacher by putting to him strange questions about the meanings of letters. He was generally silent, and would not apply himself to books. When asked why he did not learn his lessons, he replied that he loved better the knowledge of God, and did not think much of reading old books and casting up accounts. After learning some Persian from another teacher, he stopped going to school. He gave himself up to deep thinking and praying, and spent a good deal of time in the company of holy men.

This disappointed the Father, who had hoped that his son would get a clerk's education in order to take up his work later on. He next sent him to graze cattle, and then to cultivate his

fields ; but neither took the attention of Baba Nanak. He was completely absorbed in the love of God. This made Baba Kalu anxious. He made efforts to change his son's mind from the religious turn it had taken.

He gave him twenty rupees and sent him to Chuharkana, a village in the same district, to make a good bargain. He thought that Baba Nanak would buy there some goods of common use and sell them elsewhere at a profit. Baba Nanak set out with a servant, but he had not gone far when he met a party of holy men, who had been without food for several days. "What a good chance to make a bargain !" thought Nanak ; "I will spend all the money I have on them." He went to a village near by, and bought food for them.

When he returned home empty-handed, his father was very angry, and he slapped him on the face. But Baba Nanak would not turn from his ways. At last his father resolved to send him away to Sultanpur, where his married sister, Bibi Nanaki, lived. Her husband, Jai Ram, obtained for him the post of storekeeper in the Nawab's granary.

Baba Nanak took up his duties with great zeal. He spent very little upon himself and gave most of his income in charity. Yet he did his work so well that everybody was pleased with it, and the Nawab most of all. He got married and had two sons, Sri Chand and Lakhmi Das. People now thought that he had found his proper work and was settled in it once for all. But the Baba had not forgotten his real work in the midst of these activities. He still longed to be alone with God.

to pray and to think of his future plans.

Early one morning, when he was bathing in the neighbouring river of Baen, he saw a vision. He was so touched by it that for three whole days he did not appear in the city, and the people wondered what had become of him. When he came among them again, he looked like a man in dream. They asked him what had happened, and in reply he uttered these words : "There is no Hindu and no Mussalman." He would say nothing else.

GURU NANAK

II

Guru Nanak had found his mission. It was to go forth into the world and make the people good. He gave up all he had to the poor and, putting on a strange dress, departed from home. He had with him a Mussalman disciple, of the name of Mardana. He was a good musician, and sang his master's songs to the accompaniment of his rebeck.

The Guru travelled from city to city and from country to country, calling upon the Hindus and Mussalmans to believe in one God, and get rid of the numerous errors into which they had fallen.

During one of these journeys Guru Nanak visited Eminabad, in the modern district of Gujranwala. Just at that time Babar, the great Mughal, was invading India and spreading destruction everywhere. People were killed in thousands and neither Hindus nor Mussalmans were spared. Guru Nanak saw the whole sight with his own eyes, and was greatly troubled to see his countrymen so helpless. Feeling deeply pained he sat down and asked Mardana to strike the lyre. He lifted up his voice to God : "When there was such slaughter, such groaning, didst Thou not feel pain, O Creator ! Thou belongest to all. If a powerful party beat another powerful party, it is no matter for anger, but when a furious lion falls upon a herd of cows, then the master of the herd should show

his manliness.

Thus saying the Guru went into a trance. Without any organised forces to back him he could do nothing, but what could he not have done with a nation at his back !

Alas ! he had no nation at his back. He and his successors had yet to create it. But he did not sit down idly in despair. He set about doing as much as was then possible.

One way to protect his people would have been to strengthen the strongholds of caste, as so many masters of the herd had done before. But this would not have produced a lasting effect. As long as Indians were a mere herd of cows, a furious lion, now and then, would be found attacking them. The strength must come from within. The cows must themselves be turned, physically and morally, into lions. Then they could meet any enemy in the open with their own strength. We shall see how cows were turned into lions in Sikh history.

The Guru knew that his countrymen were weak, because they were not good . They had turned away from one God and had set up many gods and goddesses in His place. He taught that God was only one. He did not belong to the Hindus or the Muslims or the Christians, but to the whole of mankind. As there was but one God for all men, all men could equally worship Him. Hence there was no need of a particular caste to offer prayers for others. Anybody could address God and worship Him, without the necessity of burning incense or offering sacrifices to Him. Love for God and peace towards man was all that was wanted. He

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laid great stress on practising religion within the different occupations of the world. His rules of conduct were very simple. "Put away the custom that makes you forget God. My friends, the enjoyment of that food is evil which gives pain to the body and evil thoughts to the mind."

His way of teaching was very strange. One day he found himself at Hardwar, a place most sacred to the Hindus. There he saw thousands of people standing in the Ganges and throwing water towards the east. He also entered the water and began to throw it with both hands towards the west. The people were astonished at this and began to question him.

"What are you doing?" asked they. "And what are *you* doing, pray?" asked Guru Nanak in return. "We are offering water to the souls of our forefathers in the next world," replied the people.

"And I am watering my fields at Kartarpur in the Punjab, which is towards the west."

You are mad. How can this water travel so many miles to Kartarpur and reach your fields?

"Pardon me," replied Guru Nanak, "but how can *your* water reach the souls of your dead ancestors in the world beyond?"

There is another similar story. When Guru Nanak was at Mecca, he slept one night with his feet towards the holy place, called the Caaba. The priests made strong objections to this and said, "How dare you thus do dishonour to the House of God?" The Guru replied "Pardon me, gentlemen; you may turn my feet in any direction where God is not"

Guru Nanak in his old age returned from his

travels, and settled down as a farmer at Kartarpur. This city was founded by himself on the banks of the Ravi. Beside sowing his fields at home, he had also sown another kind of seed in the fields of the world in Assam, Ceylon, the Deccan, Afghanistan, Persia and Arabia. And sitting at Kartarpur he was gathering his harvests. People came from far and near to renew their old acquaintance and became his disciples. These disciples were called *Sikhs*.

Before his death he tested his sons and disciples to see who among them was the fittest person to continue his work after him. Bhai Lahna, one of the disciples, proved to be the worthiest, and was appointed his successor. He became known as *Angad*.

When the Guru was about to die, there arose a dispute between his Hindu and Muslim followers about his body. The Hindus said that they would cremate it, and the Mussalmans said that they would bury it. The question was referred to the Guru. He said, "Let the Hindus heap flowers on my right, and the Muslims floweres on my left. They whose flowers remain fresh till the morning may take my body." The Guru then sang a parting hymn to God and drawing a sheet over his body, breathed his last.

Next morning the flowers on both sides were found fresh; but when the sheet was lifted, there was nothing found beneath it. The Hindus tore away half the sheet and burnt it, and the Mussalmans took the other half and buried it. This happened in the year 1539.

GURU ANGAD

Bhai Lahna, who became Guru Angad, was born in 1504 at the village of Matte-di-Sarai in the district of Ferozepur. When he was fifteen years old, he was married to a lady named Khivi, a native of Khadur. He had two sons and one daughter.

In the confusion caused by Babar's invasion of India Matte-di-Sarai was looted by the Mughals. The family of Bhai Lahna left their village and went to live in Khadur. Here his father died, and he was left to do the work of shop-keeping alone. He was a good and honest shopkeeper, and everybody trusted his word and his measures. His trade flourished and, in a short time, he grew rich.

He was good, but not free from error. He worshipped the goddess Durga. Every year he led a company of pilgrims to a place sacred to her in the Himalayas. It is called Jawala Mukhi, because here fire issues from the mountain. On one of these pilgrimages Bhai Lahna broke his journey at Kartarpur where Guru Nanak lived.

The worshipper of the Goddess Durga met the worshipper of God, the Creator. Guru Nanak talked of the true God, his love, His goodness, and Bhai Lahna was so impressed that he became completely changed. He threw away the bells, which he had tied to his feet to dance before the goddess, and bade farewell to his companions, saying, "Go your ways, my

friends; my journeys are over, and I have found my Saviour."

He went home for some time to settle his affairs. When he came back to Kartarpur he found his master working in the fields. Guru Nanak had prepared three bundles of grass for his cattle, and was waiting for somebody to come and help him to carry them home. He asked his sons, but they refused, saying, "Here is a labourer coming; ask him." Bhai Lahna, who had just come up, made his bow and said "Make me your labourer, and let me do this work." And he began to lift all the three bundles at once. The Guru smiled and said, "Yes, you will shoulder the whole burden!" Bhai Lahna carried the grass to the house of Guru Nanak, but on the way his fine new clothes became soiled with the mud dripping from the grass. The Guru's wife, seeing this, was very much pained and complained to her husband. "Is it proper," she said, "that a guest should be made to do such low kind of work? Look at his silken clothes—all soiled with mud!" The Guru replied, "It is not mud, but saffron, marking him out as God's own chosen one. God found him alone fit to carry the burden."

Bhai Lahna began to live with Guru Nanak and took great pleasure in obeying the Guru's commandments. On one occasion he had to wash his clothes at midnight: at another he had to jump into a dirty pool to take out a cup. Whatever work was given him, he never minded doing it. It was for his obedience that Bhai Lahna was appointed Guru, and it was due to their disobedience that Guru Nanak rejected Page 17

his own sons.

After the test was over, Guru Nanak embraced his worthy disciple and called him *Angad*, the flesh of his flesh and the bone of his bone. He led Angad to his own seat and placed five pice before him. Then he fell at his feet and called him his successor. He asked his followers also to bow before him.

On assuming the Guruship the first thing Guru Angad did was to put down the sayings of his master in writing. They were mostly in the Punjabi language, in which no books had been written so far. There had been no need to invent a new alphahet for it. But now the vernacular came into use in place of the old and difficult language. It was felt necessary, therefore, to design a special alphabet for it, which should be simple enough to be used easily by the common people. This was called *Gurmukhi*.

Angad was chiefly noted for Patience and Obedience. It was on account of these virtues that he had been chosen Guru, and he taught the necessity of acquiring them to his followers. Even his nearest disciple, Amar Das, had constantly to be on the watch in order not to forget this lesson.

A monk called Tappa was very jealous of Guru Angad. He was severely punished by the villagers for his cruelty to Guru Amar Das, for getting the orders of his master, had encouraged the vilagers to violence. Guru Angad felt much grieved at this and said, "Thou canst not endure things difficult to endure. What thou didst was simply to please the people. Thou shouldst have patience like the earth, and firm-

ness in pain and pleasure like a mountain. Thou shouldst bear pardon in thy heart, and do good to all, no matter what they do to thee."

Such lessons of obedience were quite necessary for the Sikhs at the start; for they alone know how best to command, who have known how best to obey.

Like Guru Nanak, Guru Angad also tested his sons and his Sikhs. Finding only Amar Das to be the most worthy disciple, he appointed him his successor. He died in 1552.

GURU AMAR DAS

Guru Amar Das was born in 1479, only ten years after the birth of Guru Nanak. He belonged to Basarke, a village near Amritsar. He lived partly by agriculture and partly by trade. When he was twenty-four years old, he was married to a lady named Ram Kaur. She presented him with two sons and two daughters.

His life was very simple. He kept only one suit of clothes for himself, and what he got every day, he spent every day. He had taken the vow of a Vaishnav not to harm any living thing. When he went about in villages, selling such articles as salt and pepper, the people were charmed with his honesty and good manners.

In this way he lived on until he was sixty-two years old. He had been going on a pilgrimage year after year to bathe in the Ganges and had performed all the ceremonies required of a devout Hindu. But his mind was not at rest. Day and night he was searching for a Guru who would remove his doubts and bring peace to his mind.

One night he was unable to obtain a minute's sleep. When it was nearing dawn, it seemed as if the darkness of his mind would also disappear. All of a sudden he heard a sweet voice coming from his brother's house. On enquiry he found that it was a lady singing a hymn of Guru Nanak. She was Bibi Amro, Guru Angad's daughter, who had been married recently to Amar Das's nephew. The hymn gave him comfort which

he had never felt before. The words that had given him particular hope were : "From being reduced to a baser metal, man can be turned into gold again, if he meets the Guru." Amar Das respectfully went up to the young woman and asked her who the Guru was. She told him all she knew of Guru Nanak and of her father who had succeeded him. He asked her to take him to the Guru, and she consented.

She brought him to Khadur and introduced him to her father. In a few days all Amar Das's doubts were removed, and he became a fully converted Sikh. He began even to take meat which, as a Vaishnav, he had always avoided.

He gave himself up wholly to the Guru, and for twelve long years did hard service for him. He brought fuel and water for the free kitchen of the Guru and cleansed the pots out of which others had eaten. It was his daily practice in the morning to bring water from the Beas, a distance of three miles, and to give a bath to his master.

One night there was a great storm, but Amar Das did not fail to bring water for the Guru. As he was returning from the Beas with a pitcher on his head, his foot slipped in a hole opposite a weaver's door, and he fell with a thud. The weaver was awakened from his sleep by the noise. He cried out, "Who is the fellow who is out at this time of night ?" "Nobody else but poor Amru the homeless," said his wife.

Guru Angad heard of this remark. Next day he told the Sikhs what had happened and said, "Let it be known that Amar Das is not homeless, but shall from this time be the home of the

homeless." Thus saying he embraced him lovingly and appointed him his successor.

To avoid the jealousy of Guru Angad's sons, Datu and Dasu, Guru Amar Das left Khadur and went to live at Goindwal. But even there they would not give him rest. Once Datu came to the Guru and, seeing him surrounded by so many faithful Sikhs, could not contain himself for jealousy. He kicked the Guru off his seat. But the latter's only remark was, "O honoured Sir, pardon me. My old bones must have hurt your tender foot."

He taught his disciples to use the same humility and patience towards others. Some Mohammedans broke the pitchers of the Sikhs who were serving in the Guru's kitchen. When the Sikhs complained to the Guru, he advised them to use goatskins instead. When these too were pierced with arrows, the Guru asked them to use vessels of brass. But these also were not safe against the shots of the mischief-makers. The Sikhs could bear it no longer, but the Guru still insisted on patience, and only prayed for the softening of the enemies' hearts. The same advice he gave to a village headman : "If any one ill-treats you, bear it. If you bear it three times, God Himself will fight for you the fourth time."

He spoke against the cruel custom of *Sati*, by which a woman would burn herself alive with her dead husband.

He could not bear that some men considered others too low for them to touch without being defiled. He, therefore, encouraged the dining of Hindus and made all his visitors take their food

in his kitchen before he would talk to them.

In order to spread his religion abroad, he established twenty-two centres of preaching. His own sons proving unworthy of his choice, he nominated his son-in-law, Ram Das, to succeed him, because he alone had come up to the mark. Then the Guru died full of years in 1574, telling his Sikhs not to weep for him but to sing the praises of God.

GURU RAM DAS

Guru Ram Das was born in 1534 in that part of Lahore which is called Chuni Mandi. He was also called Jetha, because he was the first born child of his parents. Being left without a father or mother even while he was yet a child, he had to take up some kind of work early in life to support himself. He used to sell boiled pulse, of which people in cities are very fond.

One day he followed a company of Sikhs to Goindwal, where a lot of people were engaged in digging the Bawali of Guru Amar Das. He also began to work along with them.

Guru Amar Das had a daughter, named Bhani, who had reached the marriageable age, and her parents were anxious to find a good husband for her. A man was about to be sent out for the purpose, when the Guru's wife saw a handsome youth passing by her door. Pointing towards him she said, "Search for a boy of *his* likeness." The Guru saw the boy and was pleased with his looks, "He will do," he said, "there is nobody else like him."

It was Bhai Jetha. His age at that time was nineteen.

He was duly married to Bibi Bhani, and began to live in Goindwal with the Guru. He lived there, however, not as a son-in-law, but as a devoted Sikh, whose only object in life was to serve the Guru and obey his commands. He and his wife were daily seen carrying baskets of mud on their heads and singing the Guru's hymns.

He was severely tested along with the sons and the Sikhs, and was found to be the fittest man for the office of the Guru. He was appointed Guru, therefor, when he was forty years old.

In order not to have trouble with the Guru's sons by living at Goindwal, he began to build a new city called Amritsar. He gave a great chance to the Sikhs to do service for the Guru. They were busy for many years in digging the tank and building the houses. Beside inviting the Sikhs to come and live there, the Guru also brought men of fifty-two different trades to settle in the city.

He laid great stress on the service of others, not only at home and in the Guru's kitchen, but also in the large affairs of the world. He helped increase the trade of the country, and afterwards we find the Sikhs buying and selling horses, banking and doing other kinds of useful work. One of the instructions to his Sikhs was, "When a Sikh has important work in hand, join him and pray for him. If you see that it cannot be done without money, collect money for him from every quarter, and at the same time give something your-selves." He also said, "It is not bad for a religious man to collect wealth, if he spends it in God's way, and enjoys it by giving comfort to others."

It became a custom with the Sikhs to spend as little as possible on themselves and to bring all that could be spared as an offering to the Guru. The work of this collection was entrusted to the preachers, called *Masands*. They came yearly to the Guru to give an account of the work done in their centres. They also

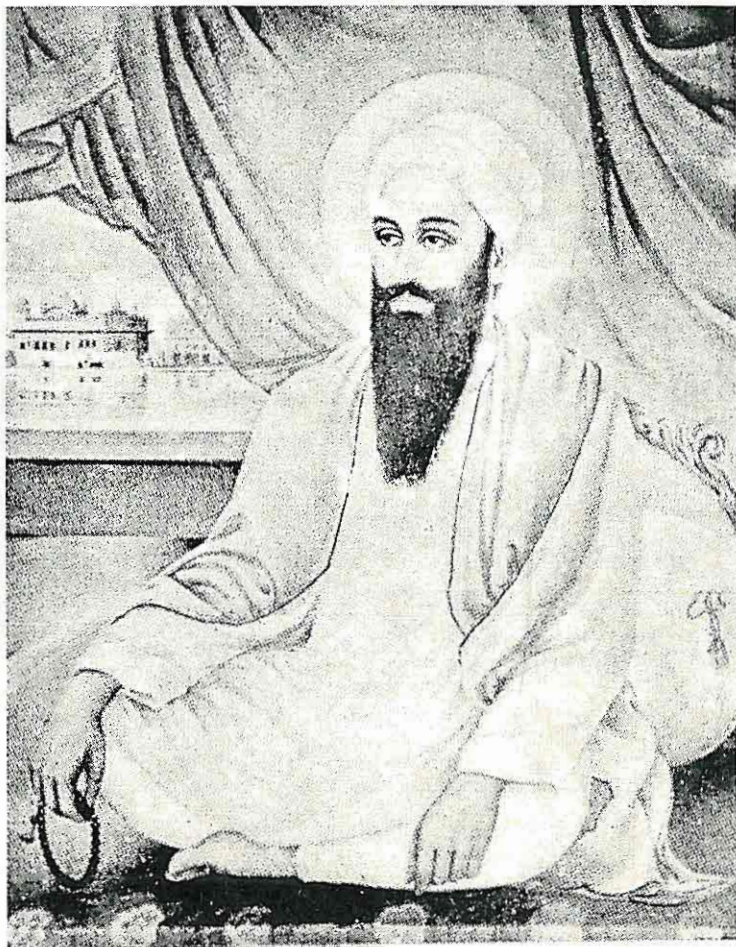
brought with them the money offerings sent by the Sikhs.

The position of the Guru became great as the number of his followers increased. But he bore it well. He said, "Those to whom God gives greatness, are respected by the world. Why should we fear its coming, when we do nothing in selfishness?"

He was as humble as ever. When Baba Sri Chand, Guru Nanak's son, came to see him he rose to receive him with respect. Sri Chand patted him on his beard and asked, "Why have you grown such a long beard?"

"To wipe the feet of holy men like you," was the reply.

When the time came to appoint a successor, the Guru tried to find out by a test who the ablest Sikh alive was. This time a son was found successful, and so Arjun Dev became the next Guru. Guru Ram Das died soon afterwards in 1581.



Sri Guru Arjun Dev Ji

GURU ARJUN

Bibi Bhani, wife of Guru Ram Das, gave birth to Arjun Dev at Goindwal in 1563. His parents took great care to bring him up as a dutiful son, and he gave evidence of his coming greatness. His elder brother, Prithia, did nothing to make himself fit for the great position of the Guru; he only used all his cleverness to undo the chances of Arjun Dev. But he did not succeed. Arjun Dev won the position by doing service and acquiring learning beyond all others.

When he succeeded his father, he made good provision for his brothers. He gave them the whole of his income obtained from landed property and house rents, and kept for himself only the offerings of the faithful.

Still Prithia was not satisfied. He would go forth and, meeting the *Masands* on the way, would take away the money they were carrying to the Guru. Guru Arjun had to think of a way to prevent this mischief. He appointed his own trustworthy *Masands* in each Sikh Centre to bring to him the customary offerings of the Sikhs. He also fixed the contribution from each Sikhs at one-tenth of his income.

He continued the work of building started by his father in Amritsar, and raised a beautiful temple within the tank. It is now called the Golden Temple. Most of the temples in India open only to the east or towards the rising sun. But the Sikh temple was open on all four sides. It meant that the Sikh religion was open to all

and had nothing to do with sun-worship.

The place became the greatest centre of Sikh activities. Thousands of Sikhs came from far and near and took great pride in doing the humblest work for the Guru.

Guru Arjun next prepared a book, called the *Granth Sahib*, in which he put all the writings of the previous Gurus together with his own. He also included chose pieces from the writings of the different Hindu and Muslim saints. When the Book was completed it was placed for reading in the temple of Amritsar.

The Guru was a great builder. He built not only the temple and the city of Amritsar, but other places as well, such as Tarn Taran, Kartarpur, and the Bawali Sahib of Lahore.

The fame of his holiness increased day by day and with it the jealousy of his brother Prithia. The Guru did all he could to please the latter, but Prithia would not be satisfied. At last, tired of the daily troubles, the Guru retired for some time to Wadali, a villag near by. Here his only son, Har Gobind, was born in 1595.

This further inflamed the jealousy of his brother, who now lost all hope of the Guruship ever coming to his family. He plotted with the Government officials to harm the Guru. He asked them to get for him a share in the control of Sikhism, as if it were a property like houses and lands, but the Emperor was friendly towards the Guru and no harm came to him.

Once a complaint was raised against the Guru that the Book he had prepared contained words against Hinduism and Islam. The Emperor ordered the Book to be produced before him. Page 29

After listening to certain portions which were read out to him, he was satisfied that there was nothing wrong in it. Eventually Akbar himself came to Amritsar and was much pleased to see the Guru. It was a year of famine and he agreed, at the Guru's request, not to take the revenue for one year from the cultivators.

This friendly ruler, however, died soon afterwards, and the enemies of the Guru had a better chance with the new Emperor Jahangir. They told him that the Guru had helped the rebel Prince Khusro with prayer and money.

Jahangir was against all new movements in religion, whether Hindu or Muslim, as disturbers of the peace. As he says in his book, called *Tauzake Jahangiri*, he had already formed a bad opinion of the Guru and his religion, as a dangerous power in the country.

Now when reports reached him against the Guru, he made up his mind to punish him. He imposed a fine of two lakhs of rupees on him, which the latter refused to pay. The Emperor then gave him up to one of his officers, named Chandu Shah. This man, who had a private grudge against the Guru, put him to death with great tortures in the burning hot month of June in 1606.



Sri Guru Hargobind Ji

GURU HAR GOBIND

Guru Har Gobind, son of Guru Arjun, was born at Wadali, a village near Amritsar, in 1595. His education was taken early in hand by his father, for the enmity of the court was increasing daily and nobody knew when the Guru's life might be ended. It was felt necessary that the future leader must be a strong man, able to defend himself with armies, if need be. Young Har Gobind was, therefore, placed with Bhai Budha, an old and experienced Sikh. He was taught, besides reading and writing, the use of weapons, riding, swimming, wrestling and many other manly sports. So he grew up to be a brave as well as a holy man.

Guru Arjun was cruelly put to death in 1606, and the duty of leading the defenceless Sikh nation fell to the lot of Guru Har Gobind. He at once set to work and made up his mind not to leave the Sikhs defenceless. He strengthened the city of Amritsar by building a fort, called Lohgarh, and sent orders to the Sikhs to wear arms. He also built a meeting-place for them, called the *Akal Takhat* or the Throne of God. Here, besides praying and preaching, talks were held on questions dealing with the defence of the nation.

The Guru was most active, and moved about the country encouraging others to take heart. Hundreds of young men gathered round him and offered to die for their religion.

The Emperor was alarmed at these prepara-

tions, and summoned the Guru to his court. The Guru went, and was sent as a state prisoner to the fort of Gwalior. He refused to take the rich meals offered to him in jail, and chose to live on the poor food obtained by the Sikhs by doing hard labour outside.

The Guru's sufferings increased the respect felt for him by his followers. They came in large numbers to Gwalior merely to kiss the walls of the fort containing the Guru. Even some good Mussalmans raised their voices in sympathy. At last the Emperor was moved to release the Guru.

Jahangir lived on for ten years after this, but he never gave any further trouble to Guru Har Gobind. Rather he tried to befriend him. He handed over Diwan Chandu Shah and his family to him for punishment. The Guru released the family as innocent, but sent the cruel Diwan to be shown up in disgrace to the people. As he was being led through the streets of Lahore, a grain-parcher struck him with a ladle, full of burning sand, and killed him on the spot.

Being left in peace, the Guru occupied himself with the work of spreading religion. He travelled from place to place like Guru Nanak and went up to Kashmir in the North and Nanakmatta, near Pilibhit, in the East. He made many converts from the Hindus and Muslims. In Kashmir particularly he converted thousands of Hindus who had gone over to Islam.

He visited the places connected with the previous Gurus and raised memorials to them. He made arrangements for the regular singing of hymns in the temples. He also built the cities of Hargobindpur on the Beas and Kiratpur in the

hills, and erected temples and mosques in them at his own expense.

The Guru was, however, not allowed to live long in peace. Jahangir died in 1627, and Shah Jahan came to rule in his place. This King changed the policy of his government towards the Sikhs, and decided to crush the movement which he thought was dangerous.

A certain Sikh was taking a fine Turkistan horse to Amritsar for the Guru. The horse was seized at Lahore by the officers of the King and presented to His Majesty. By some means the Guru recovered the horse, and war followed.

The first battle was fought near Amritsar in the first year of Shah Jahan's reign. The Sikhs, who fought for their faith, were more than a match for the royal forces who fought merely for pay or booty. There were three or four more battles during the next six years, but the Guru was always victorious. As he had no earthly object in view, he did not occupy even an inch of land as a result of these successes.

In order that the work of preaching might not suffer during these wars, the Guru made good arrangements for this. The *Masands*, who married and lived with their families, carried on the work near their homes. In distant places, such as Garhwal, Bengal and Assam, it was more difficult, and had to be given to a special kind of missionaries, called *Udasis*, who had no ties of home or family to handicap them. They were placed under Baba Gurditta, a saintly son of the Guru, who was said to be the exact image of Guru Nanak.

As soon as the wars were over the Guru again

engaged himself in praying and preaching. During the remaining eleven years of his life, he lived like a simple fakir and rejected even the use of pillows.

As his promising son, Baba Gurditta, had died in 1638, he was compelled to prepare somebody else to take his place as the future Guru. Baba Har Rai, son of Baba Gurditta, proving to be the only successful candidate, was appointed his successor. The Guru breathed his last in 1644.

GURU HAR RAI

We have seen how at first the sons of the Gurus had not understood by what means a man made himself worthy of becoming a Guru. They had been careless and would not try to prepare themselves for the office. But from the time of Guru Arjun it had come to be understood what was required. After that it was always found that a son had prepared himself for the position. Those who did not do so were always passed over.

Guru Har Gobind had five sons, Baba Gurditta, Suraj Mal, Ani Rai, Baba Atal, and Tegh Bahadur. Baba Atal, Ani Rai and Gurditta had died before their father. Suraj Mal was too worldly and Tegh Bahadur too unworldly. Therefore neither was fit. Baba Gurditta had left two sons, Dhir Mal and Har Rai. Dhir Mal, though the elder, was disloyal and had been plotting with the enemy. Har Rai alone had shown ability to lead the nation during such hard times.

He was born at Kiratpur in 1630. From the beginning he had displayed a good combination of strong and tender qualities. He was a hunter and yet he was too kind-hearted to kill the animals he had captured. He would bring them home, and feed and protect them in a zoo.

One day during his childhood he was passing through a garden. His loose coat broke the stems of some flowers and threw them on to the ground. The sight was too much for him, and

brought tears to his eyes.

He was very fond of singing Baba Farid's lines, "All men's hearts are jewels; it is wicked to distress them. If you desire to see the Beloved, grieve no man's heart."

He said, "The temple and the mosque may be repaired or renewed, but not the broken heart."

He always questioned his visitors whether they kept free kitchens and shared their food with others. Nothing would please him better than to do good to others. It was from him that the ancestors of the rulers of Patiala, Nabha and Jind received the blessing of royalty. They had come as beggars, slapping their stomachs in hunger, but went away with the promise of kingships.

Yet we should not forget that Guru Har Rai was a soldier. He kept a strong force of 2,200 horsemen, ready to be employed whenever, necessary. The Guru, however, was bent upon following the policy of peace. When the sons of Shah Jahan were fighting for the throne of Delhi, the Guru was once obliged to take out his forces, but he took good care not to shed blood. Dara Shikoh was almost a Sikh in religion. For this he was hated by his brother, Aurangzeb. Pursued by the army of the latter, Prince Dara went to Goindwal. He asked the Guru to prevent his being captured. The Guru sent his men to hold the passage of the river Beas against the pursuing party, and thus the Prince was enabled to escape.

Aurangzeb did not forget this, and as soon as he came to the throne, he summoned the Guru to his presence. The Guru did not go himself. Page 37

but sent his son, Ram Rai, to the court. Aurangzeb wanted to satisfy himself that there was nothing in Sikhism against Islam. He put many questions to Ram Rai. One was concerning a line in Guru Nanak's writings, about the Mussalmans who said that those whose bodies were burnt after death would go to Hell. It ran :

"The clay of a Mussalman may find its way into the potters' hand. The potter makes vessels and bricks out of it, and it cries out as it burns."

Ram Rai feared that, if he gave the true meaning of it, the Emperor would be offended. So he changed the wording of the line and said that the word *Mussalman* was an error. It should be *Beiman* or unfaithful. But the Guru was greatly pained at his son's weakness. He declared him unfit for the great position of Guruship and made up his mind to appoint his younger son, Har Krishan, instead.

Sikhism progressed a great deal under Guru Har Rai. He appointed Bhagat Bhagwan, a Sanyasi convert, to preach Sikhism outside the Punjab in the east. The Bhai families of Kainthal and Bagrian were preaching Sikhism in the land between the Jamuna and the Sutlej. Bhai Pheru was appointed to act as a *Masand*, between the Beas and the Ravi.

After ably performing his work for seventeen years, the Guru died at Kiratpur in 1661.



Sri Guru Har Krishan Ji

GURU HAR KRISHAN

Ram Rai was set aside, but he did not give up hope. He attached a few *Masands* to his party and called himself Guru. His *Masands* went in all directions to tell the people of his Guruship, but the Sikhs knew of the late Guru's decision, and refused to accept him.

Then Ram Rai decided to place his case before the Emperor. He told him that all his misfortunes were due to his trying to please His Majesty, and that the Emperor should now help him in getting the position and property of his father. Aurangzeb asked Ram Rai to accept his father's decision, and not to press a case so hopeless, but Ram Rai would not listen, and the Emperor, to please him, summoned the Guru to his presence.

Guru Har Krishan, born in 1656, was about six years old, when his father died. He was very young, but as is clear from the stories told about him, he was very quick in understanding.

When he was brought to Delhi, in 1663, he was invited to live at the house of Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Amber.

Emperor Aurangzeb wanted to test the Guru's understanding, of which everybody spoke so highly. As it was difficult to bring the Guru to the royal palace, Mirza Jai Singh was asked to apply the test at his own house.

He asked his Rani to dress herself in the clothes of a slave and to seat herself with other slaves behind the royal ladies. The Guru was

asked to find out the Rani from among the crowd. The Guru touched the first lady with a stick and said, "Thou art not the Rani." Then he touched the other ladies one by one, and rejected them all. At last he came to the real Rani who was sitting behind. He seated himself in her lap and said, "Thou art the true Rani." At this everybody believed that he was wise beyond his years.

The Emperor, too, when he heard of it, was satisfied that the choice of the last Guru was not wrong; so he rejected the claims of Ram Rai and decided in favour of Guru Har Krishan.

But before the Guru could get away from Delhi, he was seized with a high fever. This was followed by small-pox, which brought about his end,

While still on his death-bed, he was asked by the Sikhs to name his successor; for Ram Rai was plotting at the court, and Dhir Mal and other Sodhis were waiting for his death to put forward their claims. The Guru at this called for five pice and, waving his hand three times in the air, said, "Baba Bakale." This meant that his successor would be found at the village of Bakala. Soon after this he breathed his last, and his body was cremated on the banks of the Jamuna. This was in 1664.

GURU TEGH BAHADUR

Guru Tegh Bahadur, the youngest son of Guru Har Gobind, was born at Amritsar in 1621. He was of a quiet nature, ever busy with the thoughts of God. He took no part in worldly affairs, and after his father's death went to live in Bakala near the Beas. He was twice passed over at the time of the Guru's appointment, for his time was not yet come. He was still preparing himself for the difficult task which lay before him.

At last his turn came, and we shall see how the Sikhs were able to find him.

On the death of Guru Har Krishan the question arose as to who should be the Guru. The greedy relatives took advantage of the double meaning of his last words and flocked to the village Bakala to lay claim to the Guruship. There were many such self-made Gurus. They forcibly took offerings from the innocent Sikhs and made it difficult to find out who the real Guru was.

The wise Sikhs, however, knew better. The words "Baba Bakale," uttered by the dying Guru, clearly pointed to his "*Baba* or grand-uncle living at Bakala." This could be no other than Tegh Bahadur, who stood in the relationship of a grand uncle to Guru Har Krishan. These Sikhs, therefore, went together to Bakala and headed by one Makhn Shah Labana, visited Tegh Bahadur. They found him living in silence and peace. There was a light on his face not to be seen elsewhere; and when he talked, the

secrets of earth and heaven seemed to flow from him.

They felt that he was, without doubt, the Guru, and persuaded him with great difficulty to reveal himself.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was forty-four years old, when he took up the Guruship. He had been praying and mastering his desires, and thus he possessed a great evenness of mind, which no pain or pleasure could disturb. One day Dhirmal, who was jealous of the Guru, sent a *Masand* to kill him. The *Masand* knocked down the Guru with a shot and took away all his belongings. Tegh Bahadur was wounded, but showed no anger. The Sikhs, however, fell upon the house of Dhirmal and seized all his property, including that of the Guru which had been stolen. They also brought the *Masand* bound hand and foot to the Guru. Tegh Bahadur forgave him, and bade the Sikhs restore to his enemy Dhirmal all that belonged to him.

In order to have no more trouble with Dhirmal and his friends, the Guru went away to the hills. Here he founded a separate city for himself and called it Anandpur or the City of Peace. But even here he was allowed no peace, and was forced to move out. He went on a long journey towards the east, preaching the truth and the practice of Sikhism. He passed through Malwa and Bangar, teaching the people to give up violence and theft and to live in peace and love towards their neighbours. He caused many tanks and wells to be dug for public use.

He visited Agra, Allahabad, Benares, Gaya and Patna. On his way he came to the river

Karamnash. They told him that a man who bathed there, lost all his virtues. The Guru, not heeding this, bathed in the river, saying that no water could wash away the results of good actions.

At Patna, he met Raja Ram Singh, a Rajput general of Aurangzeb. The Raja invited him to keep him company during his march against Assam. The Rajput Prince, himself a Sikh, was the son of Mirza Jai Singh who had shown great faith in Guru Har Krishan. Guru Tegh Bahadur saw here a great chance of meeting the Sikhs of Guru Nanak to be found in Dacca and Assam, and agreed to go. He left his family at Patna and set out with the Raja.

When they reached the borders of Assam, a great fight was about to take place between the Imperial and the Assamese forces. But the Guru went between them and made peace. He brought the parties to Dhubri, a place once visited by Guru Nanak. Here he asked the soldiers of both armies to join together and fill their shields with earth in order to raise a great mound. On this a temple was built in honour of Guru Nanak, the Prince of Peace.

A messenger arrived to inform the Guru that a son was born to his wife at Patna. He returned at once and named the son Gobind Rai.

News reached him from the Punjab that the Hindus and Sikhs, as a result of Aurangzeb's policy, were passing through very hard times. He could not stay away from his people when they were suffering; he felt that his place was with them. He went back to the Punjab, leaving his son in the safe-keeping of his family and

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friends at Patna.

On his return he found that the people were weak and terrified. The Government was bent upon crushing any movement that showed resistance. When he went near a village, even his own Sikhs asked him to pass on, for they feared danger. His heart boiled at the hardness of the rulers and sank at the weakness of his own men. To shame the one and rouse the other required an act of great sacrifice. He spent some time in thinking of his future plans, and in the meantime sent for his son to be brought from Patna.

One day a party of Pundits from Kashmir went to the Guru and laid their case before him. They said that unless he did something, all Kashmir would turn Mohammedan. While the Guru was thinking this over, his son, Gobind Rai, arrived. The latter asked his father what was wrong. The Guru explained and said, "India could be saved from this danger, if the purest one among us were to sacrifice himself." The child, who was only nine years old, replied, "For that purpose who is more worthy than thou?"

Hearing this the Guru was satisfied that he had found a worthy successor in his son. He told the Pundits to go and tell the Emperor to first convert the Sikh Guru; and then all others, including themselves, would become Mohammedans. This was done, and the Emperor summoned the Guru to his court.

The Guru went to Delhi in 1675, and, on his refusing to accept Islam, was beheaded. With him died Bhai Matti Das, who was sawn alive.



Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji

GURU GOBIND SINGH

Guru Gobind Singh, born in 1666, was only nine years old when his father was cruelly murdered. The effect of this blow was very depressing at first. The people lost all hope and had no heart to do anything for their faith or country. The Sikhs began to waver in their religion, and when asked to come forward, they would often deny that they were Sikhs. At this the young Guru vowed that he would give such distinguishing signs to the Sikhs that they would find it impossible to hide themselves even if they were among thousands.

He retired for a while to the hills in the State of Nahan, where he built a fort called Paunta. Here he sat on the beautiful banks of the Jamuna and thought of the way to free his countrymen from the bonds of sin and suffering. He applied himself closely to the learning of Sanscrit, Hindi and Persian, and composed poetry which would put courage into his Sikhs. He also translated for them the old stories of Indian heroes, and engaged fifty-two poets to help him in this task. He practised every form of manly exercise, such as riding, hunting, archery and sword-play. He also boldly fought with the hill rajas when they gave him trouble. Thus he gained a good knowledge of war. His fame for holiness, wisdom and bravery spread far and wide, and the people who saw him said that here was a leader born again.

The Guru, at last, had completed his plans and prepared himself for the task that lay before

him. His object was to create a nation that would be pure enough to free itself from the oppression of priests and rulers. At the same time it should be strong enough to maintain this freedom. He came back to Anandpur, and announced his purpose. Crowds of people gathered round him. Even Mohammedans, who were not satisfied with the rule of Aurangzeb, expressed their readiness to serve him,

In 1699 he called a big meeting of his Sikhs at Anandpur and told them of his mission. At the end of his speech he drew out his sword and cried, "Is there any one here, who would lay down his life for religion?" At this five men stood up one after another and offered themselves for the sacrifice. He led them into a tent, and after dressing them in handsome clothes brought them out before the assembly. He baptised them with water stirred with a sword and called them his Beloved Ones. He took the same baptism from them as a sign that he was one of them. About 80,000 men were baptised in a few days. He also ordered that all those who called themselves Sikhs should get themselves baptised in the same way. They were taught to believe in one God and the mission of the Ten Gurus. They were made to eat together out of the same vessel so that they might feel like one. The lowest of them was equal to the highest. There was to be no caste among them, and all were to wear the same signs; that is, long hair, a comb, of pair of shorts, a bracelet and a sword. They were to call themselves *singhs* or lions. Bravery, as much as peace and purity, was to be their religion. The cows had thus

become lions, and there was no longer a danger of their being eaten by devouring beasts.

This work was designed to build up a nation of the *Khalsa* or the Pure Ones, free from the evils of religion and society. But the rulers of the time thought that it was a force meant to attack and destroy them. Anandpur was in the land of Kahlur, surrounded by other hill states. The Hindu rajas of these states saw in the doings of the Guru a threat to their own religion and power, and they combined to turn him out.

They had already fought against him, and knew his strength. Therefore they appealed to the Emperor of Delhi to help them. Aurangzeb was at this time in the Deccan. He ordered the Viceroys of Sarhind and Lahore to march against the Guru. They besieged Anandpur in 1701. The Sikhs fought with the strength given by a new faith. They held their ground against the repeated attacks of the enemy but all supplies being cut off, they were put to great hardships by hunger and thirst. The heart of their leader never failed, but the sight of the suffering Khalsa and the solemn promises of the enemy moved him to leave the town.

As soon as he went out, he was set upon by a large force on the banks of the Sarsa. There was hard fighting in the darkness and rain, but the Guru was able to make his way to Chamkaur.

His two younger sons, with their grandmother took shelter with an old servant of theirs. This fellow handed them over to the Viceroy of Sarhind. The Viceroy cruelly put the children to death, when they refused to accept Islam.

The Guru was followed to Chamkaur where

he was again besieged. The faithful little band of forty fought against thousands to the last. Both the remaining sons of the Guru were slain and only five Sikhs were left to defend the place. The Guru was obliged to escape in disguise.

In the district of Ferozepur he once more collected his forces and turned on his pursuers. The scene of this last battle is called *Muktsar* or the Pool of Salvation. The fighting was as hard as before, but this time the royal forces were defeated. The Guru managed to reach Talwandi Sabo, now called Damdama or resting place. Here he stayed for nine months, and made it a great seat of learning.

On the way he had sent a letter in Persian verse to Aurangzeb. In this he reminded him of his ill-treatment and told him that, though so many of his Sikhs were killed, he was still unconquered. "For what is the use of putting out a spark, when you raise a flame instead?" The work which the Guru had started had become a world-wide movement and, therefore, it could not be crushed by defeating or killing a few men.

The message seems to have softened the heart of the aged King. He invited the Guru to come and see him. But before the meeting could take place, Aurangzeb died in 1707 and Bahadur Shah became Emperor.

The Guru went on to the Deccan until he reached Nader on the banks of the Godavari. Here, while talking of his religion, he was stabbed by a Pathan and died a few days later, in 1708.

Before his death, he called his disciples about him and told them that the work of the Gurus had been completed and that thenceforth their spirit would live in the *Granth Sahib* and the Khalsa.

THE SIKHS UNDER BANDA

When at Nader, Guru Gobind Singh met a Bairagi monk, called Madho Das, who showed a great desire to become a Sikh. The Guru asked him who he was. He said, "I am your *Banda* or slave." From that time he was called Banda. The Guru made him a Sikh and sent him to the Punjab to continue the war with the Mughals.

His parting words to Banda were, "Remain pure and do not touch another's woman. Be true, be humble, and never make yourself a Guru. Be a servant of the Khalsa who shall be the Guru in future. Act always with the advice of the five Sikhs whom I am sending with you."

Baba Banda at once set out for the north. He called upon the Sikhs in the name of the Guru to join him. He told them that he would punish the Nawab of Sarhind, who had killed the Guru's sons. He would also punish the hill rajas who had ill-treated the Guru. The Sikhs, when they heard this, joined him in large numbers.

Banda marched through the south, plundering and destroying the cities. He reached Samana, the native village of Jalal-ud-Din, who had been employed to kill Guru Tegh Bahadur. The city was looted and Mohammedans to the number of 10,000 were put to death.

After treating Kapuri, Sadhaura, and other places in the same manner, he arrived at Sarhind.

It was here that the infant sons of Guru Gobind Singh had been bricked up alive. All Sikh were, therefore, burning with the desire to join in the coming battle. When they were near the city, they were met by a large force under Wazir Khan, the Viceroy. He had guns and elephants with him. Banda, on the other hand, had no such things, not even a sufficient number of horses; but the Sikhs fought with the courage given by desire for revenge, and they were victorious. Wazir Khan himself was killed. The Sikhs entered the city, which they looted and burned. They also killed thousands of Mohammedans.

The success of Banda made him very popular, and a large number of Hindus became Sikhs. The Sikhs of Majha and the Doab felt bold enough to rise against their oppressive rulers. From Lahore to Panipat the name of Banda became a terror.

After taking revenge upon the Mughals, Banda turned his armies against the hill rajas. He punished them and made them present him with booty. One of the rajas, to save himself from trouble, sent him a beautiful girl to marry. Banda took her and spared the raja.

In this Banda was acting clearly against the orders of Guru Gobind Singh. He also broke another rule. He began to call himself a Guru and tried to change the rules of Sikhism. This created a division among the Sikhs. Those who remained true to the teaching of Guru Gobind Singh were called the Tat Khalsa, and those who accepted Banda's views were called the Bandei Khalsa. This weakened the power of the Sikhs, and from this time the tide turned against them. Page 52

Hearing of the defeat of his forces, Bahadur Shah left the Deccan and marched to the north against the Sikhs. He turned them out of Sarhind and the surrounding country, and drove Banda to the hills. Then he went to Lahore. But here he died in 1712, and there was great confusion in the country.

Banda took advantage of this, and made various attacks from the hills. Early in 1716 he fell upon Kalanaur and Batala. Farrukh Siyar, the new Emperor, sent orders to the Viceroy of Lahore to destroy the power of Banda. All the armies of the Punjab were moved against him. He was hunted from place to place and at last was forced to take shelter in Gurdaspur. Here, after a long siege, he was obliged to surrender to his enemies.

Most of the Sikhs found in the fort were killed on the spot. Banda, with about eight hundred of his followers, was sent to Delhi. Here they were put to death in batches of one hundred a day. Not one of them tried to save his life by accepting Islam. Banda himself was killed last of all. His flesh was torn from his body with red-hot pincers, and in the midst of these tortures he died.

THE SIKHS' RISE TO POWER

A general order was issued against all Sikhs. They were hunted down like wild animals, and any man who killed a Sikh could get a prize from the Viceroy of Lahore. Many died in this way. Those who escaped went to live in hills and jungles.

Men feared to become Sikhs, for to wear long hair and receive baptism was to call for death. Those who believed in Sikhism, but had not the courage to die for it, went about shaved. They were called *Sahajdharis*.

Most of the Sikhs, however, did not mind dying for their religion. They kept bravely to their faith, and would now and then come down to the plains to visit their sacred places. They were often slain in making these attempts. In revenge they would fall upon the government parties carrying treasure, and loot every pie from them.

Slowly they gathered strength and the Mughal power was gradually destroyed by the invasions of Nadir Shah and the Abdalis.

Mir Mannu, the Viceroy of Lahore, tried to do his worst against the Sikhs. Hundreds of them were brought daily to Lahore and killed outside the Delhi Gate. But this only increased their anger and they vowed to get rid of the cruel rulers at any cost. They sang :

“We are the grass,
and Mannu the sickle;
The more he cuts us,
the more we grow.”

They built forts, which when pulled down were put up again.

Their anger rose to the highest pitch, when in 1757 Prince Taimur, son of Ahmed Shah Abdali, pulled down the great Temple of Amritsar and filled up its sacred tank. They united under two able leaders, both called Jassa Singh, and defeated the enemy. They drove out the invader and occupied Lahore. They also restored the Temple of Amritsar. Jassa Singh Kalal declared the Khalsa to be a State and struck coins in his own name.

The Mohammedan Viceroy of Lahore invited the Mahrathas to come to his aid. They came and, turning out the Sikhs, occupied the Punjab. But they could not rule for long. Ahmed Shah Abdali returned and defeated them at Panipat in 1761.

As soon as the Abdali was gone, the Sikhs came forth and began to fortify their villages. Time after time they defeated the Mohammedan armies, and the Abdali was forced to return again. The Sikhs retired beyond the Sutlej. But Ahmed Shah was too quick for them. He totally defeated them near Ludhiana and destroyed about 30,000 of them. On his return he blew up the Temple of Amritsar with gunpowder and filled up the sacred tank.

This was too much for the Sikhs. As soon as the Abdali had turned his back in 1763, they came out again and spread themselves over the whole Punjab. They defeated the Mohammedan forces at Sarhind and occupied the land between the Sutlej and the Jamuna. Next they turned out Qabuli Mal, the Hindu Viceroy of Lahore, and

occupied the territory between the Sutlej and the Jhelum. In a few years they had advanced up to the Indus.

All this land was held in joint ownership by the whole Sikh nation, called the *Sarbat Khalsa*.

The nation was divided into twelve powers of equal rank, called the *Misals*. Each Misal was under a chief called a *Sardar*, who was generally elected by his own followers. He was quite independent of outside control; but when a common enemy came to invade the Khalsa lands, these Sardars acted together. They met at the Akal Takht, in Amritsar, and decided upon joint action. Unfortunately, when there was no danger from their enemies, they quarrelled among themselves.

There were six Misals in the Majha and six in the Malwa tract. In Majha, the greatest Misals were those of the Bhangis, the Kanhaiyas, the Ramgarhias and the Shukarchakias. They began to fight each other for the supreme power. In the end the Shukarchakia Misal was successful in putting down others and acquiring their lands. The greatest leader of this Misal was Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was born at Gujranwala on the 2nd November 1780. In his early years he had had a severe attack of small-pox, which disfigured his face and deprived him of his left eye. But he soon recovered his health and grew up to be a very strong and manly youth.

His father, Sardar Mahan Singh, always took his son with him to the battle-field. The boy had, therefore, seen a great deal of war even while he was yet a child.

But he had no other sort of education, and was even unable to sign his name. His father died in 1792, when Ranjit Singh was only twelve years old.

The estate was a large one and was managed, for some time, by his mother, But she was a weak woman, and the affairs of the Misal soon fell into disorder. When Ranjit Singh reached the age of sixteen, he took the reins of government into his own hands and became an independent chief of the Shukarchakias.

The Kanhaiya Misal was already in alliance with him. This Misal was ruled over by an able lady, named Sada Kaur, who was Ranjit Singh's mother-in-law. She had seen the rising power of the Shukarchakias and, in order to prevent trouble from her strong neighbour, she had married her daughter to the young prince Ranjit Singh. From that time onward both these Misals acted together as one, till in 1821 when Ranjit Singh fell out with his mother-in-law and seized her territory.

On getting full control of his father's estate, his first and foremost desire was to possess Lahore. This was the chief city of the Province and it was necessary for any one who wished to become master of the Punjab to first take possession of it. The Afghan power being utterly weak, the city was in the hands of three Sikh chiefs of the Bhangi Misal. These men so misgoverned Lahore that the inhabitants were tired of their rule. In 1799 the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh leaders sent word to Ranjit Singh to come and take possession of the city.

He came with a large force, and the people welcomed him as a saviour. He occupied Lahore and made it his capital. Soon after this he took the title of *Maharaja*.

The Bhangis, who had been driven out of Lahore, allied themselves with the Ramgarhias and decided to crush the growing power of Ranjit Singh, but he was too quick for them. He fell upon them with a strong force and seized their chief possessions. At last in 1802 he took Amritsar from them. This was a crushing blow from which they never recovered.

The Ramgarhias were similarly disposed of a few years later. The Ahluwalias were saved only by doing loyal service to Ranjit Singh.

After dealing with the Majha Misals, he turned his attention to those in Malwa. But they checkmated him by placing themselves under the protection of the British. At first he strongly resented this interference on the part of the British, but in the end he gave way, and accepted the Sutlej as the eastern boundary of his kingdom.

Ranjit Singh was thus prevented from fulfilling his dream of bringing all Sikh states under one head. He had to content himself with the land lying to the north and west of the Sutlej. The friendship of the British, however, was useful in another way. He had no enemy to fear from the east, and could thus advance his power in the west.

He trained his armies on European lines, and made them as fit and strong as any in Europe or Asia. He employed officers both the Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike without making any distinction between them. From 1822 he even took Europeans into his service.

After signing the treaty with the British in 1809, the Maharaja marched against Kangra, and saved it from the Gurkhas only to make it his own. Then he turned his attention seriously to the conquest of the Punjab. There were three main powers to be counted with : Multan, Kashmir and Peshawar. Three times he tried to storm the fortress of Multan, but it was so ably defended by Nawab Muzaffar Khan that the Sikh forces could do nothing against it. At last, in 1818, Ranjit Singh sent his strongest army to attack the fort. The brave old Nawab defended it to the last and died fighting, when it was taken with all the booty contained in it.

Then in 1819 he conquered Kashmir, which he had invaded so often without success. During the next two years he took Attock and the Derajat. Peshawar was finally reduced in 1823, after a most sanguinary battle at Nowshera. Sind too would have fallen before the advancing armies of Ranjit Singh, but there the English

checked him.

The fame of the Maharaja was now at its height, and his friendship was sought by distant rulers. Even the King of England sent a present of some fine horses to him. Lord William Bentinck, Governor-General of India, took pride in meeting him at Rupar, and Lord Auckland, another Governor-General, came to see him in his own capital at Lahore.

To the last he remained a faithful friend of the British. When in 1838 they proposed to send a force to restore Shah Shuja to the throne of Kabul, he also sent his force along with theirs. However, he died soon afterwards in 1839.

In spite of having some faults as a man, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a good and able ruler. He created a settled government in a country which had been suffering from constant war and blood-shed. He gave high posts to the Hindus and the Muslims as well as to the Sikhs. He was very generous and, in doing justice or making gifts, he made no distinction between the Hindus and the Muslims. This added greatly to his popularity; and when he died, all people mourned for him.

THE ANARCHY

The chief strength of Ranjit Singh lay in his grand army and the able men he had gathered round him, but when the strong hand of the Maharaja no longer controlled them they became the cause of the Sikhs' ruin. The army began to consider itself the master of the kingdom. It was willing to serve any clever leader who would pay well enough. There were many such leaders, both Sikhs and Dogras, who were trying to make themselves great.

Kharak Singh, the successor of Ranjit Singh, was weak, and his minister Dhian Singh had his own way in everything. But when Kharak Singh died in 1840, and his son, Nau Nihal Singh, came to the throne, the Minister felt his position to be insecure. For, Nau Nihal Singh was as strong as his grandfather, and fit enough to manage the affairs of the state himself. Dhian Singh saw that the only way to regain his lost power was to get rid of Nau Nihal Singh. Fortune favoured him. Either by chance or by design his wishes were fulfilled. When Nau Nihal Singh was returning from his father's funeral, he had to pass through a covered gateway. The whole structure fell upon the Prince, and killed him on the spot.

Dhian Singh now placed Sher Singh, another son of Ranjit Singh, on the throne ; but another party appeared at court. It was composed of Sikhs, led by the Sandhanwalia brothers, who did not like Maharaja Sher Singh or his Dogra minister. They brought forward Rani Chand

Kaur, widow of Maharaja Kharak Singh, to be their ruler. Sher Singh had to retire, but with the aid of his army, he soon recovered his throne. Dhian Singh returned with him and the Sandhanwalia brothers had to fly.

The army that had made Sher Singh king now felt itself to be all-powerful. It did not obey him, and he was forced to rely for support upon the assistance of the English across the frontier. The soldiery disliked him more than ever for this. They formed their own *Panchayets*, or committees of five, elected by different regiments.

The English were quite willing to give the King the help he needed. They proposed to march with 12,000 men into the Punjab and, after defeating the Sikh army, to restore the Maharaja to power. When Sher Singh heard of their plans, he was terrified. He simply drew his finger across his throat to show how the Sikhs would treat him if he brought foreigners to his aid,

He tried to please the Sikhs by taking back the Sandhanwalias into favour. This alarmed Dhian Singh and he saw that his own safety depended upon getting rid of Sher Singh. By a trick he persuaded the Sandhanwalias themselves to do away with the Maharaja. They did so in 1843; but having seen through the wiles of Dhian Singh, they did away with him also.

The Sandhanwalias in their turn were killed by Dhian Singh's son, Hira Singh. Daleep Singh, another son of Ranjit Singh, was then proclaimed Maharaja. Hira Singh became his minister.

The Maharaja was only a child of five years. His maternal uncle, Jawahir Singh, was his

natural guardian, who was offended by certain foolish actions of Hira Singh, the vizir and Pundit Jalla, the Maharaja's tutor. These two Rajputs did not understand the Sikh character, and made many mistakes in dealing with the Sikhs. They annoyed them by offering insults to Rani Jindan, the mother of Maharaja Daleep Singh. She appealed to the soldiers, who killed both Hira Singh and Pundit Jalla. Then Jawahir Singh her brother, became vizir.

He, too, was unable to please the army for long. His fondness for the British was resented, and when he caused Prince Pashaura Singh, another son of Ranjit Singh, to be murdered, the soldiers' anger knew no bounds. The army *Punchayets* met together in council, and decided to punish him with death as a traitor. He was ordered to appear on the plain of Mian Mir where he was shot.

Rani Jindan was furious at the death of her brother, and openly cursed the army. She wished it to be destroyed at any cost. As there was no power in the Punjab to do it, she flung it against the British across the Sutlej.

OVERTHROW OF THE SIKHS

Hostilities between the Sikhs and the English started in 1845, but both parties had been preparing for some time. As no body was strong enough to control the Sikh Army, it was feared that in a short time there would be no government at Lahore. This would naturally lead to disorder in the country, and perhaps to war with the English. The English, therefore, had increased their forces on the frontier.

This Sikhs took these preparations to mean that the English were about to invade their territory. Thus, when in 1845 Maharani Jindan sent them against the English, they were already burning with the desire for war.

The Sikhs advanced in full confidence of success, but they were not well served by their officers. Lall Singh, the favourite of Rani Jindan, was the Vizir, and Tej Singh the Commander-in-Chief. These men did not wish their armies to succeed.

Lall Singh did not attack Ferozepur, which lay in his way; he led his army to Mudki, which was twenty miles away. There the English army, led by Sir Hugh Gough, the Commander-in-Chief, was waiting. As soon as his men were engaged in battle, Lall Singh left them to themselves, with the result that they were defeated with heavy loss.

During the night they retired to Ferozeshahr, where they took up a strong position. The English came on, and were joined by a force

brought down from Ferozepur. The firing on both sides was deadly, and the English were astonished at the way in which the Sikhs handled their guns. It was only with great difficulty that they were able to drive their opponents from the field.

This was scarcely accomplished, when another Sikh army appeared on the scene. It was commanded by Tej Singh. Had this man thrown his whole strength against the British, he would have surely carried the day, for the British forces were dead tired, and had no food nor gunpowder. But to their great astonishment and relief he retreated after exchanging a few shots, and the victory rested with the British.

The Sikh army returned across the Sutlej, and the British army rested at Ferozepur. Until fresh help came, the British were not disposed to fight. The Sikhs took courage from this and in the beginning of 1846 recrossed the Sutlej. At Badowal, near Ludhiana, they won a victory; but a few days later they were severely defeated at Aliwal.

Then the Sikhs assembled the flower of their army on the left bank of the Sutlej, and made the last stand at Sabraon. Here, as before, the soldiers did everything, and the leaders nothing. The deadly fire of the Sikhs told heavily at first, but the unfailing courage and good leadership of the British won the day for them. Tej Singh, the Sikh commander, was the first to fly. He destroyed the bridge after he had crossed it. The Khalsa soldiers were pressed back inch by inch, until they were forced to enter the river. There thousands were shot down as they were

struggling in the water, and thousands more were washed away by the stream. Even the enemy were struck with wonder, when they saw the heroic manner in which they died.

The British army crossed the Sutlej and entered Lahore in February 1846. The whole Punjab lay at their mercy, but they did not desire to be hard upon the Sikhs. They took the Jullundur Doab and the Sikh possessions lying south of the Sutlej. The Sikh State was made to pay one crore and a half towards the expenses of the war. The Sikhs could not pay more than half a crore, and to make up the remaining sum the province of Kashmir was taken from them and given to Raja Gulab Singh, a brother of Raja Dhian Singh. The Sikh army was reduced, and all the guns which had been used against the British were handed over.

It was also agreed that a British force should remain in Lahore until the end of the year to help the Sikh Government. But the Sardars were so afraid of their own army that they requested the British Government not to take away their force when the year was up. A new treaty was signed by which the British agreed to lend an army for eight years longer until the Maharaja came of age. For that service the Lahore State had to pay 22 lakhs a year. In the meantime a Council of Eight Sardars was set up to carry on the government. It was under the guidance of a British Resident, named Henry Lawrence. He was a very able man and did everything to help the Sikhs to form a good government. But the Sikhs had not forgotten their defeat and were burning for revenge.

The trouble began again in 1848. At first there was a small rebellion in Multan, where two British officers had been murdered. It would have been easily put down, if British help had arrived in time. But many months were allowed to pass before Lord Gough decided to take action ; and in the meanwhile the small rebellion had grown, and the whole Khalsa was up in arms. Even the force that had been sent under Sher Singh to reduce Multan went over to the enemy.

Then the British forces were moved up to the Chenab. After a few skirmishes, the Sikh army retired to the Jhelum and took up a strong position at Chelianwala. Here a big battle was fought, in which both parties claimed the victory. Then at Gujrat the Sikhs were completely defeated. Their fine army was broken up, and the last batch surrendered at Mankiala, near Rawalpindi. The sight was most touching, when the brave old soldiers were ordered to lay down their arms. Each man advanced with his sword and, embracing it and weeping over it, laid it down on the pile.

The day of the Khalsa had closed. The Punjab was taken over by the British and Maharaja Daleep Singh was pensioned off.

PRESENT AWAKENING AMONG THE SIKHS

After their great defeat the Sikhs were cast down for a while. But the English, who sincerely admired their bravery, soon took them by the hand. They gave them an honoured place in their armies, and the Sikhs too began to look upon them as friends. They so far forgot their enmity but in 1857, when many Indians rose in revolt against the English, the Sikhs stood firmly by them. Ever since then they have fought most loyally for the British. Wherever there is hard fighting to be done, there they are found in the fore-front of the battle.

The enlistment of the Sikhs in the Army not only did good to the Government, but it also proved of much help to the Sikhs. In the days of their rule, they had become very slack in religion. When kingship had become a thing of jewels and clothes, Sikhism, too, had become a mere fashion of the turban and the beard. When their rule went, even these outward signs of Sikhism were in danger. The people were afraid of receiving the Sikh baptism. The enlistment of the Sikhs in the British Army brought this baptism again into favour. Every recruit who joined the army was obliged to take the baptism and keep the forms connected with it.

With the spread of western education the Sikhs began to understand their weakness. A movement started among them for the removal of abuses. The first attempt at reform was made by Baba

Ram Singh of Bhaini (1815-1885) in the Ludhiana District. His followers were called *Namdharis*. They rid the country of many false practices which had crept into Sikhism. But for want of sufficient education they could not control their enthusiasm and got into trouble with the Government. Provoked by the killing of a cow at Malerkotla they fell upon the State forces in 1872. They were rounded up with great difficulty, and many of them were blown away from guns. Baba Ram Singh was arrested and taken to Rangoon.

After a few years a more general movement began among the Sikhs. It was called the *Singh Sabha* movement. In 1888 a reform association, called the Khalsa Diwan, was formed at Lahore. It had a net-work of Singh Sabhas spread over the Province. The main work was the spread of education. In 1892 a central college, called the Khalsa College, was founded at Amritsar. It was helped by the Government and the Sikh States.

From 1908 educational work became more widespread. A conference was inaugurated to hold its yearly sittings in different places. Wherever it was held, there sprang up a High or Middle School for the Sikhs. In a few years the whole Province became dotted over with Khalsa Schools.

This work was due to the Chief Khalsa Diwan Amritsar, which had taken the place of the Khalsa Diwan of Lahore.

There came a general awakening among the Sikhs, with a strong desire to reform all the evils in religion and society. The Great War gave a

new force to this desire. The Sikhs, however, felt that no reform in religion or society was possible unless the Sikh Gurdwaras or temples were reformed. The temples were the places where religion was taught. If they were full of abuses, people would learn abuses from them. Therefore they must first be reformed.

Now these temples were in the hands of priests, called Mahants. To reform them required control over them. But the Sikhs had no control over them. In the attempt to obtain this the Sikhs clashed with the law, which brought great suffering on them. But, thank God, a very good law has been passed now, which allows the Sikhs to have control over their temples.

They desired to reform the priests. But now that they have stepped into the places of the priests, they have to reform themselves.